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AMERICA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLAND.

BY R. A. ALGER, FORMERLY UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF WAR.

THERE has probably been no war in modern times as to the necessity or justice of which the opinions of men have not been sharply divided. In 1870 the responsibility for the bloody contest between Germany and France was cast upon the one country or the other, according to the judgment which the critic had formed of the events and negotiations which preceded the outbreak of hostilities. In the Græco-Turkish war, the partisan of the Greeks vindicated their cause against the aspersions of the Sultan's supporters. In our own war with Spain, the verdict as to the course of the United States was far from being one-sided, and even among our own people there were some—fortunately not many—who condemned the action of their country. It would be strange, indeed, if the present war in South Africa afforded an exception to the historical rule. That it has not done so is sufficiently obvious; for, while Great Britain is not without sympathizers among the people of European nations, the great majority of Continental observers appear to have ranged themselves on the side of the Boers; while in the United States—and even in a measure in Great Britain itself—diverse views are entertained in regard to the merits of the questions in dispute between the Britons and the Boers, which have been brought to the dread arbitrament of war.

The intensity of the interest which the present conflict has excited throughout the world is reflected in the force and vigor with which the adherents of the contending peoples have given utterance to their respective views. In the press, on the platform and in private conversation the controversy has raged, being not infrequently conducted in an intemperate spirit of passion and bitter prejudice; and in that way the issue between the British Empire and the Republics in South Africa has been discussed in almost every civilized country.

It is most unfortunate that in the United States the expression of opinion on the war has exceeded legitimate limits. In not a few cases, the public men of our country, who stand in a representative relation to their fellow citizens, and whose words have therefore a significance which never can attach to those of private individuals, have gone out of their way to pass unfriendly judgment upon the action of the British Government. Resolutions in favor of the Boers have been adopted, not only by large mass-meetings of private citizens, but even by the Legislatures of some of the States.

Such a course is greatly to be deplored, especially since the animus is directed against Great Britain. Two years ago, when, under the not too friendly observation of some of the Powers, we were discharging our duty as the guardian of liberty and humanity in the Western Hemisphere, Great Britain stood conspicuous among the nations as our friend. Nor was her cordial sympathy valueless. She remained strictly neutral; but her whole attitude toward us was so unmistakably friendly that its influence in preventing what might otherwise have occurred in the way of European intervention will never be capable of full measurement. Great Britain did nothing and said nothing, yet by implication she warned all other nations to attend to their own business and leave us to work out our problem alone. We owe her a deep debt of gratitude, and the very least we can do is to abstain from interference in her present struggle in South Africa.

I have heretofore and elsewhere stated these convictions as to the duty of the United States at the present crisis; and the number of communications which I have received endorsing my views strengthens my belief that they are shared by a substantial proportion of the American people.

It is greatly to be regretted that a man of Mr. Bryan's position, hoping as he does (I trust and believe in vain) that he will some day be President of the United States, should go about the country trying to create a difference between America and Great Britain. He is the spokesman of a great American party, and it would not be surprising if, speaking in that capacity, he placed the country in a false position before the world in its relations to the South African situation by passing from place to place, attempting to further his political ambitions by fanning into flame whatever anti-British sentiment he may find among our heterogeneous population. Here, where he is known, the object of his endeavor to

incite the American people against the British will be understood, and his statements will be valued at their true worth. So far as I am aware, he has never contributed anything that has added to the substantial growth of this country, either by employing men or doing anything to develop our industries. To use a little slang, he seems to produce "nothing but wind and noise." The course he advocates with regard to the financial policy of his country would disgrace us in the eyes of the world, ruin our credit and place us at the rear, instead of the van, where we now are, among the great commercial nations of the world. But abroad, where he is regarded only as a political leader with a large following, his words as to the policy of a friendly nation may have greater weight and effect than they ought to have.

If, during our war with Spain, the leader of one of the great political parties in Great Britain had indulged in frequent denunciation of the United States and of the motives which animated the United States in their determination to free Cuba from Spanish control, his conduct would have aroused the most bitter resentment in the minds of our people from Maine to California and from the Canadian frontier to the Gulf. If in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords prominent British statesmen had introduced resolutions condemning our Government and expressing sympathy with the weaker power against which, under a sense of duty, we had turned the vast resources of our country, the act would have excited just indignation in the breast of every American patriot. But we had no such experience. And I hold that we should treat Great Britain in 1900 as squarely as she treated us in 1898.

R. A. ALGER.